

October 17, 2007

Hearing: Michigan apple Cider - Official State Beverage HB4707

To: Honorable Representatives of the Michigan State House Agricultural Committee

We as members of the Michigan State Cider industry are here today to testify as to why Michigan apple cider should be designated as the Official State Beverage.

This idea originated from the experience that Michigan cider makers have every Fall and that is explaining and showing to our young children and their parents how cider is a part of our heritage, especially here in Michigan.

We are blessed with a climate that provides cool nights to build flavor, sunlight for color and rain to swell the apples. We are known as the Variety State when it comes to apples. This variety allows cider makers, across the state, the ability to blend the cider, an art unto itself. We even have an annual State cider contest that for the past 10 years has been judged the "best cider".

Apple cider comes from the number one fruit grown in the State of Michigan. Michigan is invariably 2nd or 3rd in production of apples in the country. The annual value is between \$130 - \$150 million. The economic impact is approximately \$450 million. Apples are grown commercially in 37 of 68 Michigan counties. Your support of this bill will distinguish Michigan cider from foreign competition - China is now the world's largest supplier of apple juice concentrate to the United States

There are approximately 90 cider mills in the State of which 25 are members of the Michigan Cider Makers' Guild, which was established in 1999.

The Cider guild, in conjunction with the Michigan Dept of Agriculture and Extension Service has been acknowledged by members of the Federal Dept. Of Agriculture as a model for the industry, providing training, certification and testing. This effort has been recognized by a US Senator "I want to commend the individual orchards for joining together to form the Michigan Cider Makers' Guild. I recognize the importance of education and training for individuals and organizations in providing our nations food supply"Debbie Stabenow.

Comparative to other States and their respective State beverages, apple cider not only has a very old history in our country, it is an inclusive event in which all members of the family can enjoy. The State of Michigan's official acknowledgment would help maintain and foster this tradition, which would be unique to all other States. "You can taste our Heritage" would be our byline.

Finally, this effort received from the Michigan Commission of Agriculture a motion which carried "to support the enhanced recognition of critical Michigan products, including apple cider." As you know House Resolution 192 officially proclaims October as Apple Cider Month in Michigan.